

Honors Course: Palestine and Palestinians: The Land where the “peoples” of three continents meet and determine our future

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Course Description:

The course is designed to enable students to discover and explore the geography, history, economics, culture and religion of Palestine and the Palestinian people as a key to understanding the Middle East and its connections to larger world issues at the meeting point of three continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe) and the starting point of the three “Abrahamic” religions (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism). Students will be expected to develop and demonstrate an understanding of this complex, fascinating and, at times, volatile part of the world in order to arrive at viable policy proposals and solutions, in the interest of social justice (transitional, retributive, and restorative justice), to the “conflicts” which have been a part of this world for far too long, conflicts which flare up into regional wars and potentially larger wars involving the major powers.

Course Objectives:

As a result of successfully completing this course students will be able to...

1. Explain what Palestine is and who the Palestinians are: the three dimensions of Palestinian identity:
 - a. Homeland, where three religions originate and three continents meet;
 - b. National, religious and secular approaches;
 - c. International (particularly complex), including Palestine’s contributions to the world (the diaspora) and the world’s influence on Palestine (the Nakba-the “catastrophe”);

2. Describe the double helix of the dueling narratives (two sides of the same coin): Dominant (Zionist Colonial Settlers: “people for a land for a land without people”) and Emerging (Palestine Natives and the Nakba-the “catastrophe”) in an attempt to create a single narrative at best or at least an understanding of both sides by exposing each side to the narrative of the other;

3. Develop and evaluate existing and potential policy proposals and strategies from the bottom up instead of the top down in the interest of peace and prosperity for the people of Palestine based on George Mitchell’s Five “Principles of Peace: Northern Ireland and the Middle East” (Fall 2000):

- a. First, “There is no such thing as a conflict that can’t be ended”
- b. Second, “need for a clear and determined policy not to yield to those willing to use violence”
- c. Third, “willingness to compromise”
- d. Fourth, “implementation of agreements is as difficult, and as important, as reaching them”
- e. Fifth, “peace will bring opportunity and hope.”

Required Texts: “A History of the Modern Middle East” by William L. Cleveland and Martin Burton, Westview Press, 2013.

“The Last Earth: A Palestinian Story” by Ramzy Baroud, Pluto Press, 2018: the collective history of the Palestinian people outside the dominant narrative based on the true stories of individual Palestinians and their struggles to live as Palestinians in occupied Palestine and the in the diaspora. (Summer 2019 JCC recommended reading list for students).

Additional Required Reading: “Village Life in the Holy Land” by John D. Whiting “The National Geographic Magazine” Vol. XXV No.3 March 1914.

Additional materials will be made available in class as a result of Professor Rabb’s participation in a 2017 Palestine study tour through the Palestinian American Research Center (PARC), materials made available by the University of Illinois through Professor Rabb’s participation in the 2019 University of Illinois International Studies Research Lab, and Professor Rabb’s visit to the recently

opened Museum of the Palestinian Peoples (“Palestine’s Cultural Embassy”) in Washington, DC.

Course objective one:

Students will do presentations on the dimensions of identity in order to demonstrate an understanding of the three dimensions of Palestinian identity.

Course objective two:

Students will be required to meet the requirements of course objective two by replicating an approach to learning each other’s historical narratives (Dominant and Emerging) by participating in an exercise first developed in Adwan, Sami et al (eds.) in “Side by Side: Parallel Histories of Israel and Palestine,” NY New Press 2012. In this approach students compare the dominant Israeli historical narrative with the emerging Palestinian historical narrative commenting on how they are the same/how they are different in an attempt to create one narrative acceptable to both at best or construct new parallel narratives which are more inter-dependent, accommodating, and responsive in order to foster mutual understanding.

Course objective three:

As part of the course students will play the role of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in a five week online international negotiation simulation (March through May) by participating in the ICONS project (the International Communications and Negotiations Simulations Project) involving other community college students playing the role of other countries as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and inter-governmental organizations (IGOs).

Course grade and evaluation:

1. Presentations on Palestinian identity including an exam on students’ presentations (30%).
2. Participation in narrative project and preparation of written single narrative as described above (30%).

3. Participation in the simulation as described above as well as a paper comparing the simulated world with the real world (30%).

4. Attendance, participation, and discussion (10%).